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ABSTRACT

In 1990, the Native American Prevention Project of AIDS and Substance Abuse began to develop, implement, and evaluate culturally sensitive in-school prevention programs for Navajo youth and their families. This project paper combines ethnographic interviews and observations with baseline quantitative data collection. A baseline survey of 174 9th- and 10th-grade students demonstrated a significant number of indicators that put students at risk of dropping out, including poverty, early sexual relations and unplanned pregnancies, physically and socially risky behaviors, and drug and alcohol abuse. At least five primary Navajo cultural themes must be accommodated in designing outreach and in-school programs that are relevant to at-risk Navajo youth: (1) individual autonomy; (2) experiential learning; (3) proper public behavior, including the need for public recognition of expertise prior to speaking on a subject; (4) family, including the extended family and other kinsmen, and (5) respect for elders and those with authority. The research suggests that prevention curriculum should emphasize culturally relevant practices that promote youth self-efficacy and involve the family and community. This paper contains numerous personal narratives from Native American youth interviewed. (KS)

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TOUGH ISSUES FOR NAVAJO YOUTH AND NAVAJO SCHOOLS

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"Mostly on the Reservation it's a lot different."

(Navajo Teenager)

The Navajo[1]

The Navajo, or Dine', are the largest American Indian tribe in North America, inhabiting a 25,000 square mile reservation that takes up the northeastern corner of Arizona and straddles parts of Southern Utah and Western New Mexico. The reservation sits on the Colorado plateau and is home to approximately 170,000 Navajos. It is characterized by arid climate and sparse desert vegetation. Many Navajo live in scattered homesteads on the reservation, others in small towns. Another 70,000 Navajo live outside the reservation in adjacent border towns (towns located near the edges of the reservation) such as Flagstaff or in larger urban centers such as Denver, Los Angeles, and Phoenix.

At the turn of the century, Navajo traditional culture revolved around sheep herding on scattered homesteads. However, Navajo philosophy embraces change wherever it can be incorporated into Navajo tradition. With the overall industrialization of the Southwestern United States, the Navajo have accepted new employment patterns and lifestyles while maintaining strong linguistic and cultural traditions.

Key aspects of Navajo culture have been described in many different sources[2].

The primary location of the Native American Prevention Project of AIDS and Substance Abuse (NAPPASA),[3] which provides the data collected for this chapter, is several agency towns on the western portion of the Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona. We have been working in junior and senior high schools located on-reservation and high school dorms located in border towns. These schools/dorms are Bureau of Indian Affairs- (BIA) supported or affiliated and primarily serve Navajo youth.

Our approach is based on the principle that healthy students are more likely to stay in school and be successful than are impaired students. The in-school prevention portion of the project integrates HIV/AIDS and alcohol and other drug abuse prevention approaches with existing communication practices in local schools, health services, and community life. The purpose of the project is to provide students with new skills and strengthened self-efficacy beliefs that will lower their risk of negative social and health consequences, including school dropout, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and HIV infection.

Problems of Language, Culture, and Poverty

It is not too dramatic to state that the majority of the students in the high schools collaborating with our

research project, and virtually all other schools on the reservation, are at risk for dropping out of the education system or for some type of lifestyle problems while they are in school. At the least, the probability that Navajo students will finish high school is less than 50 percent. We found many precursors and indicators of these conditions in the answers to the questions asked in our baseline survey of a sample of 174 ninth- and tenth-graders. We found that approximately 20 percent did not like school, 26 percent felt their teachers did not like them, 32 percent did not like their teachers, and almost 25 percent of them felt it was not bad to "skip" school for a day or longer.

For some students, the risk of dropping out or failing comes from a direct conflict of language and culture between the schools and the demands of extended families and competing values or cultural processes in the home. At other times the risk derives from widespread social pressures such as intergenerationally-transmitted substance abuse, parental neglect, and other forms of family disruption such as poverty, lack of positive role models, and abusive conditions. In addition, some of the risks for failure come from the schools themselves, where resources are limited and the quality of instruction varies significantly from class to class and from school to school depending on the availability of staff and other local resources. For whatever the reason, the 174 ninth- and

tenth-grade students in our baseline survey demonstrated a significant number of indicators that they might have problems for future academic success. Forty-six percent of them had flunked at least one year of school, 17 percent had been "kicked out" of school (expelled) at least once, 34 percent had been suspended at some time, and 70 percent had "ditched" school (been truant) at least once in the past.

Some of the conditions that appear to lead to these statistics are described below. One is poverty. The Navajo are faced with unemployment rates as high as 40-50 percent (Yates, 1987). There are virtually no jobs in any economic sector on the reservation. The few employment positions available are in government bureaucracies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service, tribal government positions, work in the surface mines on Black Mesa, piece work as artisans, and some bare subsistence farming and livestock raising. These positions are limited, and there is serious competition for them, so many Navajo people see formal education as irrelevant to subsistence on the reservation. Others see the need to seek employment off reservation in order to survive. This compels many adolescents and adults to move to larger cities where low-paying jobs place negative pressure on their educational opportunities and those of their children. Since family ties remain strong, workers return home several times a year for traditional ceremonies, recreation, and kinship based

social obligations. This produces a great deal of family and individual mobility, which can substantially disrupt educational progress for Navajo youth in ways similar to the problems encountered by migrant farmworker families in the United States.

Another set of risks to education result from early sexual relations and unplanned pregnancies among Navajo ninth- and tenth-graders we surveyed. Ten percent of the students had feared that they were pregnant in the past, and four percent had actually been pregnant (or, for the boys, had gotten someone pregnant). A doctor had told a total of almost ten percent that they had a sexually transmitted disease. The average age of these students was 15 years old. The youth in our sample reported that their average age of first intercourse was about that same age, and earlier for some. The approximate time of first alcohol and drug experimentation in this group was slightly younger than sexual experimentation (14.3 years for the ninth- and tenth-graders). For many Native American youth, as for other groups of American adolescents, sex is often accompanied or preceded by alcohol or substance use. Mixing sex, alcohol, and drugs diminishes the use of prophylaxis and the careful selection of safe partners and practices (Rolf et al. 1991a). This problem may be exacerbated in boarding schools, both on and off the reservation, where children are more isolated from their extended families, and more prone

to boredom and problem behavior. One of the consequences is teenage pregnancy leading to school dropout and little chance of achieving any type of financial success.

The Navajo students are also engaged in a number of other activities that put them at both physical and social risk, with potentially serious consequences for their further education. As many as one-fifth reported that they had hurt themselves on purpose and stolen property while 14 percent indicated that they had taken part in vandalism. A substantial segment of these teenagers said they had taken part in thrill-seeking behaviors which could effect their health and well being as well as their performance in school.

Table 1

Risky Things Students have Done in the Past

Activity	% of Students (N=147) Who have Engaged in Activity
1. done something risky on a dare	33
2. broken a rule set by parents	47
3. stolen or shoplifted	21
4. slipped out at night without parents knowing	24
5. driven with a dangerous driver	36

6.	physically hurt yourself on purpose	21
7.	vandalized property	14

Taken all together, these behaviors and the consequences of the various pressures in the students' environment put them at high risk for academic problems. These conditions help create the tough cases reported in this chapter.

Research Methods

We collected the data for this chapter as part of a four year collaborative research project begun in 1990 to develop, implement, and evaluate in-school AIDS, alcohol, and other drug abuse prevention programs that are culturally sensitive to the needs of Native American youth and their families. Our research combines ethnographic interviews and observations with baseline quantitative data collection (including pre- and post-test evaluations of intervention efforts).

Phase 1 of the project involved a pilot study that included ongoing discussions and ethnographic interviews with community residents, leaders, and young people. We wanted to ensure that key local beliefs and customs were appropriately included in the prevention curriculum. Similar activities were pursued in the surrounding

communities to help educate and motivate community residents to support the project and to adopt self-protective attitudes and behaviors towards AIDS and the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Phase II, began in Fall 1991, and includes evaluations and follow-up assessments of the enhanced school-based interventions. Phase II also continues the development and evaluation of the prevention communication approaches to Native American families, and reports the project's findings to participating schools, communities, and the health promotion field.

Open-ended, semi-structured interviews, focus group sessions about two hours long, and survey data, supplemented by advanced ethnographic research methods, helped us quantify some of our qualitative findings. In a series of open-ended interviews, taped and transcribed verbatim, we asked about key cultural themes, processes, beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, and relationships. Some observations were recorded in field notes, others were videotaped (especially classroom behavior and role-playing for the prevention curriculum). This data collection process allows the ethnographic data to support the project's quasi-experimental design for evaluating the effect of the prevention curriculum that forms the core of the project. We also used free listings on cultural domains[4]. The free listing technique produces phrases and words in a particular area of knowledge that can then be used in developing a

curriculum that is appropriate to the local area.

We have conducted a total of 14 focus groups to date: three with adolescent females in three different high schools, three with adolescent males at the same schools, and eight with adults (Indian Health Service Health Advisory Board members, dorm counselors, teachers, and parents). On all but one occasion, the moderator for each of the 14 groups was a Navajo interviewer. Female moderators led the female groups, and male interviewers moderated the male groups. A Mexican-American male who has had extensive ethnographic interviewing experience in the area, moderated one of the male teenage groups. Each focus group had four focal questions, supplemented by six to eight major probes and multiple minor probes, to assure comparable coverage of information.

Community Life

High schools are a major focal point for community life and activity in the two reservation small, isolated towns where we conducted our study; sports play an important role in community identity and social life. It takes more than an hour of driving time to reach neighboring border towns. The largest border town has a population of approximately 40,000, and most reservation communities have less than 2,000 residents. One older male student stated the problem of isolation this way:

> You know especially out away from [our school], in the boonies so to say, where there's hardly any facilities to go to. You have a cousin or something living out there, if they have a problem what would you tell them? They don't have any money to buy gas to go into [town] or whatever nearby...what kind of answer would you give that person? You'd be more involved that way, wouldn't you? Get more down to a personal level. What suggestion would you make other than get off of it. Like he said, you wouldn't become involved personally ...it is hard.

There are at least five primary Navajo cultural themes that must be accommodated in designing outreach and in-school programs that are relevant to Navajo youth who are at risk: (a) the Navajo ideal of independence and autonomy, (b) the high level of importance given to learning, (c) the theme of proper public behavior, including the need for public recognition of expertise prior to speaking authoritatively on a subject, (d) the importance of the family, including the extended family and other kinsmen, and (d) respect for elders and those with authority. We use these themes throughout the rest of the chapter to explain the differences between Navajo and Anglo reactions to the conditions necessary to deal with students who are at risk of failure in school or who have dropped out of school.

A. Autonomy. The Navajo culture values autonomy; the right of individuals to make, or not make, decisions effecting their lives based on their knowledge, experience, and cultural values. This is similar to the Anglo-American cultural value of individualism, which expects people to be independent, to do their own thing, and to become self-sufficient as individuals. However, autonomy differs from individualism in subtle ways. The most important difference is that the Navajo culture provides a strong sense of community, of belonging to a family, a clan, and the Dine' as a whole, and using the ideal of community belonging and correct behavior to shape the decisions of the individual. Anglo individualism makes community orientation more difficult, because it is more atomistic, while Navajo autonomy is not. One adolescent male stated:

> If I was trying to help a friend it depends up to him, if he wanted to stop he can stop. I can help. If he doesn't want to, his own choice. Can't do nothing about it.

Over the course of our focus group sessions this attitude manifested itself on a number of occasions. The belief in autonomy makes it hard for Navajo to help other persons unless these persons have clearly indicated that they want help. This condition clearly effects any organized effort to reduce the risk-taking of those students who are the "tough cases" on the reservation. When Navajo

youth were asked what they could do to help their friends or relatives who were getting into trouble because of risky behavior, they virtually all said that they would try to talk to those individuals, to let them know what the correct behavior would be, and then they would leave it up to the persons to decide what they wanted to do. None of the students suggested the types of active interventions that are common in Anglo society, such as direct placement in some type of intervention program. The following is a typical example of the strength of the idea of individual autonomy.

> Ethnographer: What sorts of things encourage people to change behaviors that put them most at risk...?
>
> **Teenager: Well, um....[you] can tell [them] about things, perhaps you could encourage them to get seen, but that would fall back on the individual themselves.**

B. Importance of Learning. Learning is vitally important to Navajo. It is the basis for becoming fully human, becoming a functioning member of the community. There is a strong value for experiential learning, for learning by observation, listening, and example (especially the example of elders and people with authority). Formal education, however, is not necessarily considered the most important part of that learning process. In fact, some

Navajo have been heard to comment that they see the importance of learning all of their lives, while Anglos see the importance of a formal education process and diplomas, regardless of whether they learn anything or not.

C. Proper Public Behavior. There are different rules for Navajo teenagers than for Anglo teenagers when it comes to public sharing of both information and opinion. The following quote indicates the caution with which a young person is expected to approach the public discussion of personal issues.

> **Well, first of all, I guess I would be cautious of who I wanted to share that topic with, and some of the barriers would be maybe my parents are very traditional and they would say you're not supposed to talk about such things. That would be one of the barriers for...um, they would also probably bring up the fact that I always have to wait on experience that I'm not old enough, until I'm older** (teenage boy).

This cultural value effects the willingness of Navajo students to discuss social problems, personal problems, sex, and family conditions in either a classroom setting or in any type of public forum. This reluctance can be overcome with trust, but in general it is incorrect for Navajo to talk about issues publicly if they have not been recognized by their elders as being knowledgeable about that subject;

recognition normally comes with adult status and experience. Navajo youth are subject to criticism for speaking out without that recognition. Consequently, they must be cautious about sharing information, especially about family conditions, sexual activities, or negative behavior among friends and the extended family.

D. The Importance of the Family. Traditional Navajo kinship obligations produce a powerful social environment that can either support educational progress against all of the odds, or can support the risk-taking behavior of students who are at odds with the educational system. These obligations include help in time of trouble, economic assistance, reciprocal support obligations, and a major portion of an individual's personal identity. When Navajo people introduce themselves in a public forum on the Reservation, they normally begin by formally identifying their clan membership and their family membership as a part of the introduction. The extended family is the basic unit in a cultural support system that can reinforce both positive and negative behavior, as is illustrated by the following quote about drinking.

> My first experience is I agree with Jane here, these come from the family, the immediate family. Because all my mom, my dad, my grandpa, you know, they've been drinking. So it goes down the line, you know. Now it's getting to my niece and my

> nephew. And one of my nieces says that "Why not?" when she wants to drink she says, "Why not? My grandmother did. Why not me?" Not doing it, you know, it's just like sort of like trying to taste it or, you know, just like Helen said, they're doing just for kicks...It's what they're doing now and then, and then they're beginning going to drugs. And wanting to know how it feels, how it tastes, something like that. So I was thinking that maybe it's just like from the family it goes down the line, something like that.

The family can act as either a powerful support system to prevent problems, or as a system that reinforces the negative side of academic failure, dropping out, or having low social aspirations. It "goes down the line" for all of these conditions.

E. Elders and Authority. Navajo youth, as a rule, respect their elders, and knowledgeable authorities. That respect often produces distance and difficulty in communicating with parents about risky behavior or problems in school. When we asked what member in your family, or other relatives, would you talk with the most about difficult subjects, the teenagers replied that they would talk to their aunts, sisters, and brothers in preference to anyone else.

> I'm more comfortable talking with my sister about

> my personal stuff, and you're asking me who I'm not very comfortable with, and you're asking me who I'm not very comfortable with who I'm talking...? My mom. Every time I ask her something she say "you're not grown up enough to ask that question" (teenage girl).

Parents were rarely turned to for advice about subjects such as difficulties in school, sex, drugs, or other teenage problems. The following response is fairly typical of the distance these teenagers perceive between themselves and their parents.

> Some things are hard to tell your parents 'cause you never know what they could do to you. Some things they'll say, like if you tell them you have done this, just tried it, they'll get real mad. I've known some girls' parents are like that (teenage girl).

This communication gap on the reservation contributes to the risk of student dropout, academic failure, and lasting social problems. The teenagers and adults we interviewed both recognized that it was harder for young people now than it was in the past.

> Yeah, they just can't understand how it is to be a kid in this here society. It's hard because you have to watch what you're doing (teenage boy).

The following interview illustrates the discomfort

adolescents feel about discussing serious problems with their parents. In interviewing the parents, we found they encountered the same difficulty in the other direction and often told us that they would prefer for school professionals to talk with their children about tough or embarrassing subjects, such as sex and AIDS.

First teenager: Um, they're not really comfortable talking with their parents, you can send them to their sisters and brothers.

Second Teenager: Yeah, sometimes they (parents) get real mad...

Interviewer: They were once kids themselves.

First Teenager: Yeah, but not as hard as we have it right now. Right now parents think we have it easy....I mean, like, there's more drinking now than there has been since the early years. Like, I read books about it, and the drinking problems have increased so much that we have it harder than our parents have had it. And it's hard to explain, like....If a person's your friend and your parents ask you, "Well, who told you to do it?", and you think, "Oh, no, what should I say to my mom?", you know, and then it's like, you don't want to tell that person, you don't want to tell on that person because that person and other people will be after you for it. So it's kind of

scary, like, if you tell on them they'll go after you.

While there is a generation gap that serves as a barrier between parents and teenagers, at the same time, age and experience are respected. The following exchange demonstrates that while parents are difficult to approach, there is a preference for talking with trusted older individuals, even if these individuals are only a few years older and are siblings or cousins. When asked who the students could talk to, one replied:

The one who understands. When you talk to them, the one you're most like comfortable talking to. The one mostly you really get along with.

Interviewer: So does it matters on age?

Yeah.

Interviewer: What age do you think you'd feel more comfortable with? Same age, or someone older?

Someone older.

Youth Hangouts

Other chapters in this book discuss urban street culture and gang behavior. Those conditions are vital to understanding youth at risk in many urban settings. The Navajo situation is significantly different. In all of the towns we worked in, you can start from the high school, walk

in any direction, and be beyond the city limits in ten minutes or less. Many of the streets of the towns are unpaved and short. For subsistence level housing, trailer parks take the place of housing projects; interspersed on lots with western style housing there are Navajo hogans and sweat lodges that traditional families use. Living "across the tracks" has meaning in a number of these towns. There are "sides" of town and neighborhoods, some of which are tougher and poorer than the other sides. But the total rural environment prevents a street culture and gang territories from developing in the way that they do in urban settings.

The meeting places and hangouts for these rural teenagers include reservoirs and arroyos, the local fast food restaurant, vacant lots, people's homes, and the "boonies" (areas in the brushlands outside of town). People also meet at the theaters, behind school and in school, or they cruise around on bikes and in cars and trucks (mobile meeting places that can be parked out in the brush).

There are plenty of social groups, including the kinship-based groups, but while the teenagers may think of themselves as gangs or clubs, any resemblance to urban gangs and gang violence is normally temporary and mild in comparison. There are plenty of hangouts for youths, but those are different from the street corner territories of urban teenagers. In some ways, there are no clearly defined

protectorates that "belong" to specific youth groups in rural areas, compared to the territorial divisions in inner cities.

The Role of Alcohol and Drugs in Placing Youth At-Risk

Alcohol abuse and a wide variety of other drugs play an important role in placing Navajo teenagers at high risk for dropping or flunking out of school, and dying from accidents.

> There was two girls and they got ranned over ....We lived in Salt Lake in an apartment and they were both in the back of our apartment. They had this milk carton and there was gas in there, it was half-way and they were sniffing in there from that little hole, and when they got up they were walking 'round in the middle of the road and they just got run over (teenage girl).

In fact, this is the single most dominant condition that creates "tough cases" on the reservation, especially when combined with family disruption and neglect. Urban-rural differences in substance abuse have been documented (Weibel-Orlando, 1986), with abuse rates varying by group, setting, and for individuals between settings. About 50 percent of Native American youth are considered at high risk for alcohol and other drug abuse (e.g., Beauvais, Oetting and Edwards, 1985). The overall rate of alcoholism among Native

Americans is two to three times the national rate although the patterns of substance abuse differ markedly between regions, tribes, and within tribes (Heath 1985).

The students in the NAPPASA cooperating schools project are no exception to these overall findings. Alcohol and drugs play a substantial role in placing these Navajo youth at risk and are at the root of many problems at both home and school. A survey administered in the fall of 1990 illustrates the scope of the problem. The table below indicates that 27 percent of our sample of ninth through twelfth-graders in an agency town high school attributed at least some of their school troubles to drinking; 31 percent said that alcohol hurt their school work; and the percentages for fights, passing out, money problems and other problems indicate that alcohol creates a serious condition for these adolescents. The students were asked, has drinking alcohol at any time in the past ever caused any of the following problems?

TABLE 2

Problems Caused by Drinking Alcohol at Any Time in the Past

Problem	Percent of Students Experiencing the Problem
1. a traffic ticket	4
2. a car accident	6
3. an arrest	16
4. money problems	18

5.	trouble in school	27
6.	hurt school work	31
7.	a fight with other kids	25
8.	a fight with parents	7
9.	damage to a friendship	23
10.	pass out	35
11.	couldn't remember what happened	34
12.	break something	21

A. Alcohol and School. Some teenagers resisted alcohol and drug abuse, in spite of considerable peer pressure. Others could not resist, and there were serious consequences for the teenagers' school experience.

> Um, well, my first experience with alcohol was with, um, with my own brothers. I was staying at my aunt's house and they came in but they were just drinking and driving around and they just stopped by. They got some beer with them and I didn't really want to drink it but everybody else was drinking it and said maybe I'd try it and I did, and I don't know what happened. I woke up the next day with a headache and big head and I was late from school (teenage girl).

These comments are backed up by our survey statistics. We found that 23.5 percent of the ninth- and tenth-graders responded that they had used alcohol at school events in the

past 12 months, 9.8 percent had used alcohol on the way to school, 8.6 percent had been drinking in school during school hours, and 22.1 percent had been drinking during school hours, but away from the campus, and 22.7 percent had been drinking alcohol while driving.

These statistics need to be understood within the overall context that the Navajo reservation is technically "dry." It is against tribal law to possess or sell alcoholic beverages on the reservation. Given this legal prohibition, there are two ways that Navajo youth obtain alcohol. One is by traveling off reservation to neighboring border towns or trading posts located just beyond the reservation boundaries. The other is to purchase alcohol from illegal sources on the reservation.

Most of our focus groups of teenagers (ages ranging from 13 to 17) drank and over one-half reported drinking regularly. Even those who did not drink had stories of the ways that alcohol consumption among their families and friends created problems at home and at school. We discovered that one way for teenagers to get beer and wine was to find someone older (often a family member) and "to make a run" (a quick drive to this or any other place just off the reservation where someone can buy alcohol). Coyote Waits[5] Trading Post, about 35-40 miles from this particular reservation town, is the first stop off the reservation where it is legal to buy alcohol. "Making a run"

is the phrase used to indicate

Interviewer: The Reservation is dry supposedly. How do people get alcohol?

Make a run.

I think we all know too many boozers down here where we call them bootleggers.

Interviewer: Bootleggers?

Yeah. Make a run. The [trading post] run. To Coyote Waits Trading Post.

The other mechanism for buying beer and other alcoholic beverages is to go to a bootlegger who lives in the town. All of the students in our focus groups seemed to know who the bootleggers were, and where to find them.

Interviewer: How you get the booze?

Bootleggers.

Interviewer: Is it hard for a teenager to go get booze?

Easy. (Several responses)

Interviewer: You just buy it? They'll give it to you?

Yeah. No ID (laughter).

Interviewer: No ID? Just hand money, huh?

Yeah. Got to have the cash.

Interviewer: Price is double than you would pay?

Nah. Yeah it is. Triple I think. $3.00. $3.50 plus tax.

Interviewer: If I needed a beer badly, could I

just wander through town saying "I need a beer"?

(Laughter). Go to Southside.

People know where to go to get it?

Yeah.

Not only is booze easy to purchase, the students often said that drinking is a family affair. One elder on the tribal health board discussed, with despair, the education that bootleggers give their own children, who are often employed as look-outs and runners for the family trade.

When we asked the students how they first started drinking, they said it happened because of their parents drinking, because of peer pressure, or because of pressure from other family members. The following quote, from one of our adult focus group participants, illustrates the full cycle of involvement with alcohol, from child to adult, that is potentially awaiting these at-risk students.

Alcohol is a very powerful substance. I know that for a fact. I had my first drink when I was about eight years old and then it was something done, something that was part of the routine thing every day. It was just something that my brothers did, my mom did, grandma did, grandpa, my aunt. You know, everybody was using it. So my concept of being part of that family was I was already getting into it. So therefore it was just very simple for me to just pick up a bottle and just

take off. And when I did, what I didn't realize was I was getting deeper and deeper and deeper into the substance use. I didn't realize how powerful it was until one day I discovered I had no control over it. And when I discovered I had no control over it, I realized that it took a fight to overcome it. So as a high school student it was cool, in my part, it was cool to go out and drink with your friends. It was an ideal thing, it was an image, a boastful type of image. You know, "Hey, you know, I can drink two six-packs and not have to get drunk." What I realized was my tolerance toward it was getting greater and greater. And it involves a lot of unconscious reaction to a lot of things, including who you're with, your judgment on your partners are way off. You end up next morning in a motel or in your bedroom with a strange woman. This is something that is very, very, very powerful and you have no control over it because you're addicted to it. That was just part of my experience when I was growing up. And now I'm recovering, but they call it recovering alcoholic. I've done it all my life so I can't go and drink normally. It's too hard.

If drinking does not "start with the parents," it often starts from pressure from older brothers and sisters, as in

the case of this teenage girl who began her experimentation with alcohol at a heavy binge drinking level.

> My first experience was my freshman year and after I started school I met my sister over there and it was on Friday night, I spent the night at my sister's house. I didn't know if she'd let me take beer out so I went with her and so we spent the night at her house then we were walking around. She lives at [housing tract]. Walking around back and forth on the bridge and then we went home and the beer, she found she had a case in there, and Jack Daniels and around 10:00 we started drinking that and after that I told her I didn't want any so she gave it to me and I started drinking and pouring it in a 32-ounce cup, she'd fill it all the way up. I drank about eight cups of that...
>
> Interviewer: Eight?
>
> Yeah, and about half, in a smaller cup I'd drink half of Jack Daniels and after that I drank about two more cups, and I don't know what happened. Next morning my dad came over and told me what I did and why it happened, and so I went home. That Saturday night, I came over and I was kind of like, worse, and [sister] went back over there spend the night over there, and she got two more

> cases over there and told her I didn't want any and she invited some friends over. Her friends brought a keg over, a big keg of beer. And then they were in the kitchen drinking, I was in the living room all bored out, so I decided to join them. Then I drank about, um, 44-ounce cup. I drank 10 cups of that, and I drank one cup of Yukon Jack, and I don't know what happened...

If the first experience with alcohol was not a family affair, the students explained that there are plenty of peers who wanted to drag you into the drinking crowd.

> Like, this just happened a couple of years ago, there was like this except there was normal squeeze bottles and it just barely came out and one of my friends said "my treat" because it was right after a volleyball game and we won [rival school], we were all happy and everything, he says let's celebrate, and he says "I'll treat you all" and so we went to the store because the store's the only place we can go because in Dry Gulch it's just all boondocks (laughter). We were on the varsity team and she was on the varsity team too, we played real good, but we won [rival school] and we were all happy and everything and then he gave me one of these squeeze bottles and it was real different and, um, I went, "I'm real thirsty" and

> I went [sound effects] like that, and I go, "Oh, God, it's burning down." It hurt so much, I just spit it out, and I thought, God, I wanted to kick his butt and I hated it. And, God, it's like they just trick you into it. They think it's funny (teenage girl).

B. Drugs on the Reservation. School administrators in Native American communities tend to be intensely interested in educational programs that can help prevent student misuse of alcohol and other drugs. The following quote indicates that there is a consistent movement of drugs to reservation campuses from metropolitan centers.

> A friend brought crack from Phoenix one time, you know, I'm like, "What's that?", I thought it was like salt. She had that salt stuff and she told me, "Check it out, girl" and I go, "What's that?" and she goes, "Crystal ice, ice crystal" or something like that. I asked her how she used it and she wouldn't tell me, but that's all I know of, that new one (teenage girl).

Native American adolescents sampled from 201 different tribes showed a higher experimentation rate with drugs than adolescents from a national sample (Oetting, Goldstein and Garcia-Mason 1978). More recent studies (e.g., Beauvais et al. 1989) confirm these trends and call for intervention strategies which begin in elementary school. Although there

are wide intra and inter-tribal variations, as many as 62 percent of adolescents have used marijuana regularly, and as many as 22 percent have used inhalants regularly (Coulehan et al. 1983; May, 1986). Since some of the types of drugs used vary by region, we asked our focus group participants what different kinds of drugs Navajo youth use? The following is a typical group response.

First Teenager: Alcohol. Marijuana. Pills. Inhalants. Glue. Hash. Acid.

Second Teenager: Ice. Aspirin (laughter). Spray can, gasoline. Glue.

Third Teenager: White out. Nail polish. Listerine (laughter). For the old man.

Interviewer: What about grass? You mentioned marijuana is here, available. Who do you go to?

Teenager: Pusher.

Interviewer: Is there someone around that's selling it to the students or young people?

Teenager: Mostly on school campus.

Interviewer: You don't go to their house?

Teenager: Depends, they must know you real good then. They don't know you, you could go there and they won't sell it. You must know that guy real good.

Interviewer: So I think that like crack and stuff like that hasn't really gotten that bad here?

Angel dust and ice?

Teenager: They make acid.

Interviewer: What about cocaine? What about inhalants, you mentioned spray paint?

Teenager: That depends...the one's that are crazy do it. I go down past the bushes down below my house and I run through there and I see a lot of spray cans, hair sprays and mainly hair sprays. And some, like I saw this guy wearing...spray on his socks and he was smelling them.

Interviewer: Say a guy used it that morning when he came to school with you, would you recognize that guy's on something?

Teenager: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you ask or can you tell by looking?

Teenager: Tell by how they...how his eye looked, who they are, kind of know them. Even by their smell.

Substance abuse among Native American teens is a highly complex phenomena, influenced by a host of factors including "peer and parental modeling of substance use, misunderstanding of the effects of drugs, lack of motivation to control substance use, inability to anticipate the consequences of substance use, inability to resist peer and other social pressure, developmental pressure to adopt 'adult' behavior, desire to express solidarity with a

particular peer group or subculture, and lack of alternative means of coping with depression, boredom, tension and other negative emotions" (cf. Heath 1985; Gilchrist et al. 1987).

Perceptions of School

Like teenagers everywhere, there are Navajo youth who dislike the educational aspects of school and only attend because they like being with their friends. Schools, including boarding schools in western states, are a primary social setting in rural areas. They are one of the better places to see friends, to be seen, and to engage in the social activities that are important to teenagers (e.g., dating, dancing, drinking, and hanging out with friends). The social pull of the junior and senior high schools should not be seen not as simply a threat to the educational process and to discipline, but also as a potential force to provide an environment for culturally relevant group learning outside of the classroom, as well as in it. The following quote demonstrates the strength of this social pull.

> At school, I don't want to go to school, and my friend tells me to go to school with her. And like we ask around people we know after school, they'll say "no we don't stay in school. And my friends, they tell me don't cut classes, and then they come along too. I don't know. School,

homework.

Interviewer: You don't want to be in school, you don't want to do homework?

I like being in school because you have fun, but not homework and school work (laughter).

Interviewer: Just want to be where most of...

Yeah, to be with my friends in school. You know what, we sit in the back and we make noise and we get kicked out of class. So, I don't know. And there's nothing to do at home. So we're at school.

Policy Implications

Our research has generated sufficient data at this point in time to allow us to identify a number of policy conditions that should either be reinforced or modified on the basis of the existing data.

A. Family Involvement in Prevention Programs. School-based prevention programs targeting youth can become more powerful if effective ways are identified to link them with local family practices and values. We believe that the most potent risk prevention package for school-aged youth will combine the following components with necessary adaptations for cultural appropriateness: (a) teen/parent or surrogate-parent/teen communication programs to encourage preventive attitudes in family contexts, and (b) community directed

communication activities to prime adults, tribal elders, and other opinion leaders for acceptance of prevention programs. Our efforts are being directed at reaching parents at Chapter House and other community meetings, health fairs, through employers, and employee assistance programs, as well as through the use of posters, employers and employee assistance programs, radio programs, trigger films to help initiate parent/child discussions, and skills-building materials to help parents communicate with each other and their children. These components must also be linked to the ones described below. This approach has been successfully adapted for use in various intervention projects with Native Americans (e.g., Dinges, 1982; Schinke et al. 1988), where the programs have incorporated Navajo beliefs about life and behavior using extensive ethnographic data collection, community open-ended surveys, small group discussions, and a family-oriented approach.

B. School-Community Linkages. Joy Dryfoos, in her book Adolescents at Risk (1990), indicates that successful prevention programs typically link schools, communities, and the work place. In addition, risk-prevention researchers concerned about risks among Native American youth (Gilchrist et al. 1987; Oetting et al. 1988; & Schinke et al., 1985, 1988) have recommended designing interventions which effect not only the high risk youth but also address key people in their school, family, and community contexts. Our present

project participants include Native American adolescents, their peer groups, school and dorm staff, their parents and other family members.

There are a multitude of both formal and informal linkages between the schools and the communities on the reservations that must be taken into account in creating any successful prevention program in the classroom. Rural school boards are made up of local community members, many of whom graduated from the school and have a vested interest in some part of it, especially the extracurricular programs. In a small town where everyone knows everyone else, the school policies, politics, programs, and issues are well known and often a point of cooperation or conflict within the community, depending on the composition of the town's competing social groups. The schools and their needs can be overlooked or of very low priority, and people can be quite competent at not getting involved. However, the potential for a high degree of communication and interaction is present in small rural school districts simply because there are a limited number of individuals who are willing and prepared to take on the tasks of shepherding the school system. Any proposed change or innovation in the existing order of things, including programs to reduce risks to the "tough cases," must be thoroughly adopted by the community or they are guaranteed to fail.

Outsiders can play a useful role as catalysts, but the

typical distrust of strangers that is common to rural settings, and the knowledge that the outsiders will eventually leave the community in the future, regardless of the success or failure of any new programs they might be promoting, creates a much different dynamic for program development than in the greater anonymity of urban school systems. This makes the community-school bridges all that much more important in these areas. Therefore, we believe these outreach efforts should focus on selected themes developed from our ethnographic research (focus groups, key informant interviewing, observations, and other techniques) and from the results of other successful prevention programs, to maximize the catalytic action that we can provide as outsiders, while keeping the programs strongly focused in the local community.

C. Lessening Youth Alienation. Experts recommend that messages to youth be developed within a framework that builds youth's self-efficacy and lets them know they are cared about. We are finding that an important tactic in this integrated prevention program is to include components which are designed to shift perceptions of peer group norms of behaviors from negative, risk-taking behaviors to positive ones. Traditional Navajo culture encourages group identity and discourages individuals from claiming to be models of ideal behavior or as one who wishes to be seen as better than the norm. We believe that we need to adapt the

projects' role-playing and modeling tasks so that they promote appropriate self-efficacy beliefs, assertive communications, and perceptions of Navajo youth group norms. Therefore, our project is incorporating action-oriented group skill-building activities as one of the culturally appropriate methods for not only conveying information to the students, but also allowing them to put these skills into practice. These methods can be used within many types of course and classroom contexts.

Our prevention curriculum emphasizes culturally relevant practice in dealing with problem situations and is designed to tie into existing positive cultural values in the community. It is a highly participatory program that includes role-playing exercises, videotaping, and situational dialogues in which the students enact the ways they would prevent or deal with problem situations (following Schinke et al. 1988). Material from the Navajo Nation's new alcohol and drug abuse prevention curriculum developed by the Navajo Nation tribal government has been incorporated into the program, with localized and culturally appropriate curriculum elements embedded in an overall alcohol and drug prevention curriculum. Keeping the course work action-oriented and peer-group-based reduces the risk of alienation and boredom that drive all too many Navajo youth out of school and into abusive situations. Our pilot study results suggest that these activities are proving

successful. We feel that these types of interventions can and should be extended to prevention efforts aimed at keeping Navajo teenagers in school, or to help them return to school after dropping out.

Additionally, youth need positive creative opportunities identified within the given city or region that can offer excitement, interest, and the chance for young people to develop self-efficacy and the four major "senses": the senses of belonging, of usefulness in life, of competency, and of personal influence over his or her own life. For example, in our program, students plan their own health conferences or fairs where they can provide information to their peers and parents about AIDS, as well as alcohol and drug abuse prevention. They will be involved in all aspects of planning these activities and developing educational materials and prevention messages. Therefore, the activities have the potential to empower the students by taking them out of traditional classroom roles and giving them a chance to be help givers rather than just help receivers. Other types of activities that can meet these criteria include art programs, writing and acting videotape scenes and dramas about alcohol and other drug prevention issues, programs to write soap operas for the radio and comic books or photo-novels with prevention story-lines.

We are also in the process of developing several types of peer group activities as extensions of the school-based

curriculum program. In order to overcome conditions of peer influence, we have found that the students prefer peer group based, hands-on educational processes. A one-shot curriculum is not potent enough to modify the pressures from peers and the community to participate in substance abuse episodes. Any educational process expected to change this situation will have to be built into multiple levels of the overall educational process. Following the self-help models of alcohol and drug abuse (such as Alcoholic and Narcotics Anonymous), it has been suggested that we do not often enough ask the high-risk child to help someone else. By helping others, these individuals can often go a long way in overcoming their own problems and maintaining positive behavior, thereby reducing risks to themselves, others and society.

The lack of street gangs and other negative social groups creates one mechanism that educators could use to experiment with new out-of-school programs to help rural youth. Providing rural teenagers with a comfortable place to meet and do things that they like would probably be attractive enough to them to encourage a substantial number to participate in prevention programs.

Conclusions

This project is providing data that both confirms and challenges existing theory and the findings of previous

research on risk prevention for adolescents in the United States. The confirmation of theory and findings comes primarily in the areas where cultural beliefs and knowledge are congruent between Navajo teenagers and teenagers in other cultures, and where general theories of human behavior are in effect between cultures, such as the effects of peer associations and alienation on risky behavior. The challenges result predominately from the need to be culturally sensitive in communicating about risks, models for success, for proper behavior, and for intervention in problem situations.

Examples of the conditions where working with Navajo students at risk are parallel to other teenagers in the United States are described in detail in the chapter. They include the need for program linkages between the schools, communities and the work place through both formal and informal networks, including parental involvement in programs, support for the programs from teachers, school boards, local government, and businesses. Other elements in common with other populations include the conditions that put teenagers at risk and the fact that the reduction of those risks is embedded in a complex social, cultural, economic, political, and educational matrix.

On the other hand, the curriculum developed for the teenagers must speak in their language, must have images and symbols that are meaningful to them, must activate their

social and familial networks in culturally appropriate ways, and must accommodate to the prevailing norms, expectations, and conditions that are in effect where they live. The curriculum must be "localized" and made culturally congruent with their expectations about the world around them. Thus, urban images are either confusing, boring, or are simply ignored for these teenagers, just as the Navajo lifestyle would be foreign to inner-city students.

The success of our risk reduction programs lies in a judicious combination of these two findings and processes. We have shown that conditions such as peer interventions, outreach, modeling of positive behaviors, and self-efficacy training can be embedded in culturally appropriate contexts or communicated through culturally congruent media to produce successful results. Future research from this project will include information about the most effective processes for combining the necessary cultural models with the most universally effective process that will make these types of programs work for all of the tough cases.

Endnotes

1. We would like to thank the other members of the project who were willing to read drafts of this chapter and who provided comments on various aspects of the content. These people include Dia Cha, Connie Z. Garcia, Christine Benally, and Rose Denetsosie, and Cheryl Alexander.

2. The classic ethnographies of Kluckhohn and Leighton (1946) and Underhill (1956) offer comprehensive and respected descriptions of Navajo traditional culture (historical sketches, notes on ceremonialism, language, and worldview). Other literature covers specific facets of Navajo culture, eg. Downs' (1972) description of Navajo sheep herding, Reichard's (1974) treatise on religion and Witherspoon (1975) and Lamphere's (1977) extensive examinations of Navajo kinship and social structure. Correll's (1979) reexamination of Navajo history is noteworthy for its attempt to redress biases which have clouded accounts of the Navajo past.

3. The NAPPASA project is funded by NIAAA grant R01-AA08578-01. It is a multidisciplinary cooperative school based education program on HIV, alcohol, and drug risks for Navajo adolescents on the Navajo Reservation and in towns bordering the western portion of the Navajo Nation. The primary purpose of the project is to produce an in-school prevention curriculum directed at improving Navajo teenagers' knowledge of behavior that puts them at risk for HIV infection, related to alcohol use, drug abuse, and unsafe sexual practices.

4. The free listing technique is a general anthropological rapid assessment method in which cultural experts are asked to provide lists of all of the important elements in a cultural domain (a bounded area of organized cultural knowledge). For example, our informants were asked to provide us with a list of all of the types of alcoholic beverages that Navajo youth drank. When this data is compiled, it provides a cultural map of this domain. The information can be used as simple saliency listings of the elements. However, by collecting key cultural and demographic information about each informant, the information can also be used (in conjunction with cluster analysis and multi-dimensional scaling) to provide profiles of key differences in risk patterns and hierarchical structural analysis of the elements in the domain.

5. We are following the accepted anthropological procedure of changing all of the names of people and places in this article to pseudonyms, in order to respect and protect the privacy and the confidentiality of our research informants and the cooperating school systems that were partners in this project.

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